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THE

FALL SHADOWS



LOOK!

THESE
TWO
TERRIFIC
ISSUES

NOW
ON
SALE



The **LONG
HAUL**



**ENGAGE the
ENEMY**

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MAKE SURE—Get your copies—today !

THE TALL SHADOWS

IT WAS THE SECOND YEAR OF WORLD WAR II AND THE IMPERIAL JAPANESE ARMY WAS SWEEPING TRIUMPHANTLY ACROSS SOUTH-EAST ASIA. THEY WERE FANATICAL FIGHTERS, RUTHLESS AND WITHOUT FEAR OF DEATH. THEIR TERRIFYING REPUTATION GREW AND GREW, WHILE THE MORALE OF THEIR OPPONENTS WEAKENED.



Chapter 1. *Fugitives*

7TH DECEMBER 1941. THREE CRACK JAPANESE DIVISIONS WERE DEPLOYED ON THE CANTON-KOWLOON BORDER READY TO INVADE THE BRITISH-HELD PORTION OF CHINA BORDERING THE ISLAND OF HONG KONG. ONLY THREE, UNDER-STRENGTH BRITISH BATTALIONS STOOD IN THEIR PATH.

THIS IS IT, ROY. THE JAPS HAVE ATTACKED PEARL HARBOUR! IT'S WAR ALL RIGHT AND WE'LL BE IN THE THICK OF IT! ASSEMBLE THE COMPANY.

RIGHT, SIR!



THE 2ND SOUTH WEALD BATTALION RECEIVED THE NEWS WITHOUT EXCITEMENT. DURING THE LONG-DRAWN-OUT MONTHS OF WAITING, IT HAD SOMETIMES SEEMED TO THEM THAT THEY WOULD NEVER SEE ACTION ...



THE JAPS MEAN BUSINESS -- AND SO DO WE! OUR JOB WILL BE TO PREVENT THEIR GETTING TO HONG KONG ...

BUT RUSTY BAKER AND TOSH SCOTT, TWO OF THE BATTALION'S BANDSMEN, HAD JOINED THE ARMY TO PLAY TROMBONES...NOT TO FIGHT! THEY DID NOT RELISH THE COMING BATTLE.

WE'LL BE SITTING DUCKS, RUSTY!

STONE THE CROWS!
AND I THOUGHT WE WERE
ON A CUSHY NUMBER
OUT HERE!



DURING WAR, THEIR JOBS WOULD BE TO ACT AS STRETCHER-BEARERS. THEY REPORTED TO THE BAND-SERGEANT AT THE MEDICAL POST...

COME ON, YOU TWO LAY-ABOUTS! SHOVE THESE ARM-BANDS ON!



LOOK, SARGE... HOW ABOUT ME AND TOSH GOING BACK TO HONG KONG. SOMEBODY'S GOT TO LOOK AFTER THE BAND INSTRUMENTS.

GET THAT ARM-BAND ON! THE ONLY INSTRUMENTS WE'RE INTERESTED IN NOW ARE THE ONES THAT GO BANG!



DURING THE MOONLIT NIGHT, THE BATTALION, WITH NERVES TAUT, WAITED FOR THE ATTACK THEY KNEW WOULD COME.

WHAT D'YOU RECKON THE JAPS WILL BE LIKE?

CHICKEN-FEED! LOT OF SCRUFFY LITTLE BLOKES WITH SPECS AND BIG TEETH!



NEVER HAD AN ENEMY BEEN SO UNDER-ESTIMATED! AT DAWN, THE JAPANESE ATTACKED. IMBUED WITH A FANATICAL FIGHTING SPIRIT, THEY STORMED ACROSS THE BORDER.



COR! WE'LL NEVER HOLD THIS LOT!

AT THE REAR, THE MEDICAL STAFF AND STRETCHER-BEARERS WERE SWAMPED BY THE STREAM OF WOUNDED. ALREADY THEY WERE WITHIN RANGE OF THE ENEMY ARTILLERY...

TOSH, WE'RE IN TROUBLE ALL RIGHT! THERE'S NO FUTURE IN THIS LOT!

I'VE NEVER WORKED SO HARD, MATE...



TOSH SCOTT WAS SCARED. HE LOOKED FOR GUIDANCE TO HIS PAL, RUSTY BAKER. RUSTY WAS A STRONGER, MORE STOLID CHARACTER -- BUT HE WAS A SIMPLE MAN, CREDULOUS AND TRUSTING...

HOW IS IT GOING, SHORTY?

IT'S TERRIBLE, RUSTY! THOSE JAPS AREN'T HUMAN! WE'VE HAD IT, I TELL YOU!



RUSTY HEARD THE NEWS -- AND HIS MIND WAS MADE UP. AMBULANCES WERE STREAMING BACK TO THE HOSPITALS IN KOWLOON AND HONG KONG. QUICKLY HE PUSHED TOSH INTO ONE OF THEM...

GET IN, TOSH. WE'LL SCARPER TO HONG KONG! FROM WHAT SHORTY SAID IT LOOKS AS IF EVERYBODY WILL PULL BACK THERE, ANYWAY. WE'LL ONLY BE JUMPING THE GUN A BIT...



BUT THE CITY OF KOWLOON WAS ALREADY BEING BOMBED AS THE AMBULANCE TRIED TO THREAD ITS WAY THROUGH THE RUBBLE OF COLLAPSED BUILDINGS...

COME ON, TOSH! WE'LL MAKE A DASH FOR THE HARBOUR AND GET THE FERRY TO HONG KONG.



THE PANIC-STRICKEN CITY-DWELLERS SWARMED TO THE HARBOUR TRYING TO FIGHT THEIR WAY ABOARD THE ALREADY OVERCROWDED FERRY-BOATS. THE TWO DESERTERS WERE AMONG THEM.

IT'S FULL UP, I SAY! GET BACK, YOU LOT! HEY--YOU TWO BLOKES! WHERE D'YOU THINK YOU'RE GOING?



BUT THE MILITARY POLICEMAN GOT NO REPLY. THE TWO MEN MYSTERIOUSLY DISAPPEARED.

COR! A REDCAP! LET'S SCRAM AND GRAB A SAMPAN! THERE'S MORE THAN ONE WAY OF GETTING ACROSS.



AT LAST THEY FOUND AN OUT-BOARD MOTORED SAMPAN, ONE OF THE WATER TAXIS TRAVELLING TO AND FROM HONG KONG.

HONG KONG SIDE, BOY! AND CHOP-CHOP!

NO CAN DO! NO ROOM! BOOKED NOW... YOU SEE?



THE SMALL CRAFT ALREADY HELD A PASSENGER, A PROSPEROUS-LOOKING MERCHANT. BUT RUSTY WAS DESPERATE.

LOOK, MATE! YOU'RE TAKING US ACROSS IF YOU LIKE IT OR NOT!

COME! THERE IS ROOM FOR ALL...



THE SAMPAN FIRST HEADED FOR A LARGE JUNK IN MID-HARBOUR. AS IT CAME ALONGSIDE, THE MERCHANT PREPARED TO CLAMBER ABOARD.



THE ISLAND OF MACAU WAS A HALF-DAY'S SAIL AWAY. THIS WAS AN OPPORTUNITY THEY COULD NOT MISS!

OKAY, MISTER!
WE'RE COMING
WITH YOU!

YOU ARE WELCOME,
MY SON.



EVEN AS THE BIG JUNK SLOWLY GATHERED WAY, JAPANESE AIRCRAFT BEGAN AN ALL-OUT RAID ON THE ISLAND OF HONG KONG. MILES BACK ON THE MAINLAND, THE SCATTERED REMNANTS OF THREE BRITISH BATTALIONS FELL BACK BEFORE AN OVERWHELMING ONSLAUGHT.



ESCORTED, WITH OTHER ESCAPING CRAFT, BY A BRITISH NAVAL GUNBOAT, THEY HEADED FOR THE OPEN SEA. THE PANIC OVER, RUSTY TRIED TO JUSTIFY THEIR ACTIONS.

THOSE NIPS ARE UNBEATABLE. WE'RE JUST ONE MOVE AHEAD OF THE REST OF THE BLOKES, THAT'S ALL!

SURE!
WE'VE DONE
THE RIGHT
THING,
RUSTY!

BUT THEY WERE NOT YET CLEAR OF THE BATTLE FOR HONG KONG. THE FLEEING ARMADA OF JUNKS, LAUNCHES AND COASTAL CRAFT WAS CONSTANTLY STRAFED BY JAP FIGHTERS OPERATING FROM NEARBY CHINESE AIRSTRIPS...

OOR! SEE
THAT? FLYING
PRACTICALLY AT
WATER LEVEL --
THOSE JAPS DON'T
CARE, MATE!

LATER THAT DAY THEY ARRIVED SAFELY AT MACAU. THE BRITISH CONSUL HAD LITTLE TIME TO SPARE FOR THE TWO BANDSMEN, THOUGH HE REALISED THEIR EARLY ARRIVAL AT THE ONLY REMAINING HAVEN IN THE CHINA SEA WAS HIGHLY SUSPICIOUS.

THERE'S NOTHING I CAN DO FOR YOU NOW. REPORT TO THE PORTUGUESE ARMY BARRACKS FOR ACCOMMODATION AND COME AND SEE ME LATER.



DURING THE NEXT TWO WEEKS THE TWO RUNAWAYS SUNNED THEMSELVES IN MACAU, WHILE IN HONG KONG, THEIR COMRADES FOUGHT A BITTER, LOSING BATTLE AGAINST OVERWHELMING ODDS. ON CHRISTMAS DAY, THE CONSUL SENT FOR RUSTY AND TOSH.

HONG KONG SURRENDERED THIS MORNING. THE CASUALTY FIGURES ARE OVERWHELMINGLY HIGH. YOU WERE VERY LUCKY TO GET AWAY.





Chapter 2, *Retreat—or Die!*



EIGHTEEN MONTHS EARLIER, WHILE THE 2ND. BATTALION HAD BEEN SUNNING THEMSELVES IN PEACEFUL HONG KONG, THE 1ST. BATTALION OF THE SOUTH WEALD REGIMENT WERE FIGHTING A BITTER REARGUARD ACTION AGAINST THE GERMANS IN FRANCE...

AS MAJOR BLAKE HURRIED AWAY, CORPORAL BOB LASSITER QUICKLY CHECKED HIS AMMUNITION. WITH HIS PLATOON COMMANDER AND SERGEANT KILLED, HE WAS NOW IN CHARGE ...

HOW MUCH AMMO HAVE WE GOT, SLIM?

THIS IS THE LAST BELT, CORP!



ALTHOUGH THE BATTALION HAD HELD THE LINE, THEY HAD PAID FOR THEIR BRAVERY WITH HEAVY LOSSES.

MAKE EVERY ROUND TELL! WE'VE GOT TO HOLD THIS BLOCK FOR A WHILE LONGER.



BOB CURSED AT THE LACK OF ANTI-TANK GUNS. THEN SUDDENLY HE REMEMBERED ...

WAIT A JIFFY! ONE OF THOSE THREE-POINT-SEVEN ACK-ACK GUNS MAY STILL BE OKAY. PETE! GEORDIE! COME ON!



THE MEN RUSHED TO THE WAITING GUNS. ONE OF THEM SEEMED TO HAVE ESCAPED ALL DAMAGE. QUICKLY THEY PREPARED FOR ACTION...

CLIMB INTO THE LAYER'S SEAT, GEORDIE. TRAVERSE AND DEPRESS THE BARREL, WHERE'S THE AMMO?



BOB DID NOT KNOW MUCH ABOUT THE GUNS --JUST ENOUGH TO RAM A SHELL INTO THE BREECH AND FIND THE FIRING LEVER...

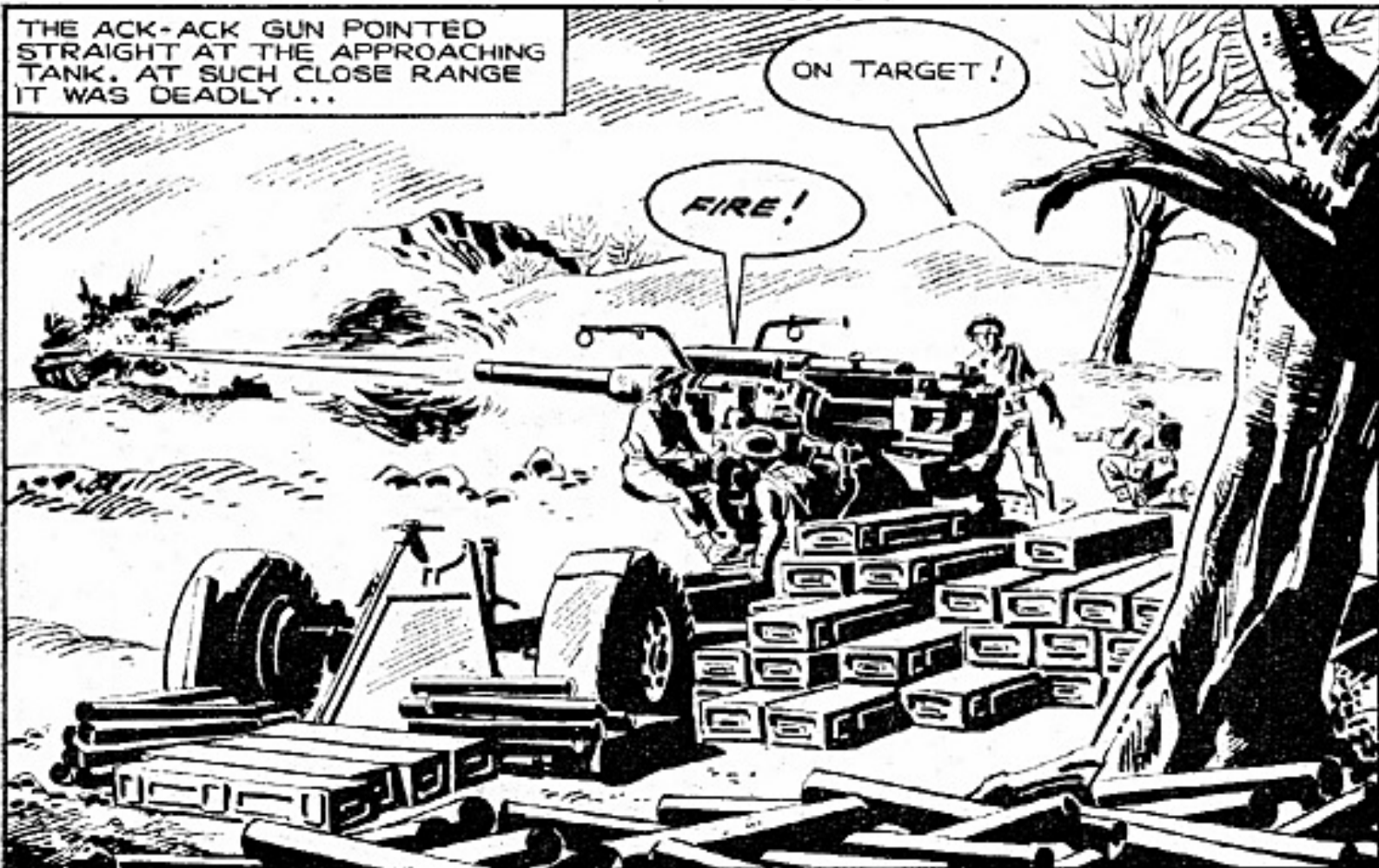


GET IN, YOU AWKWARD CUSS!

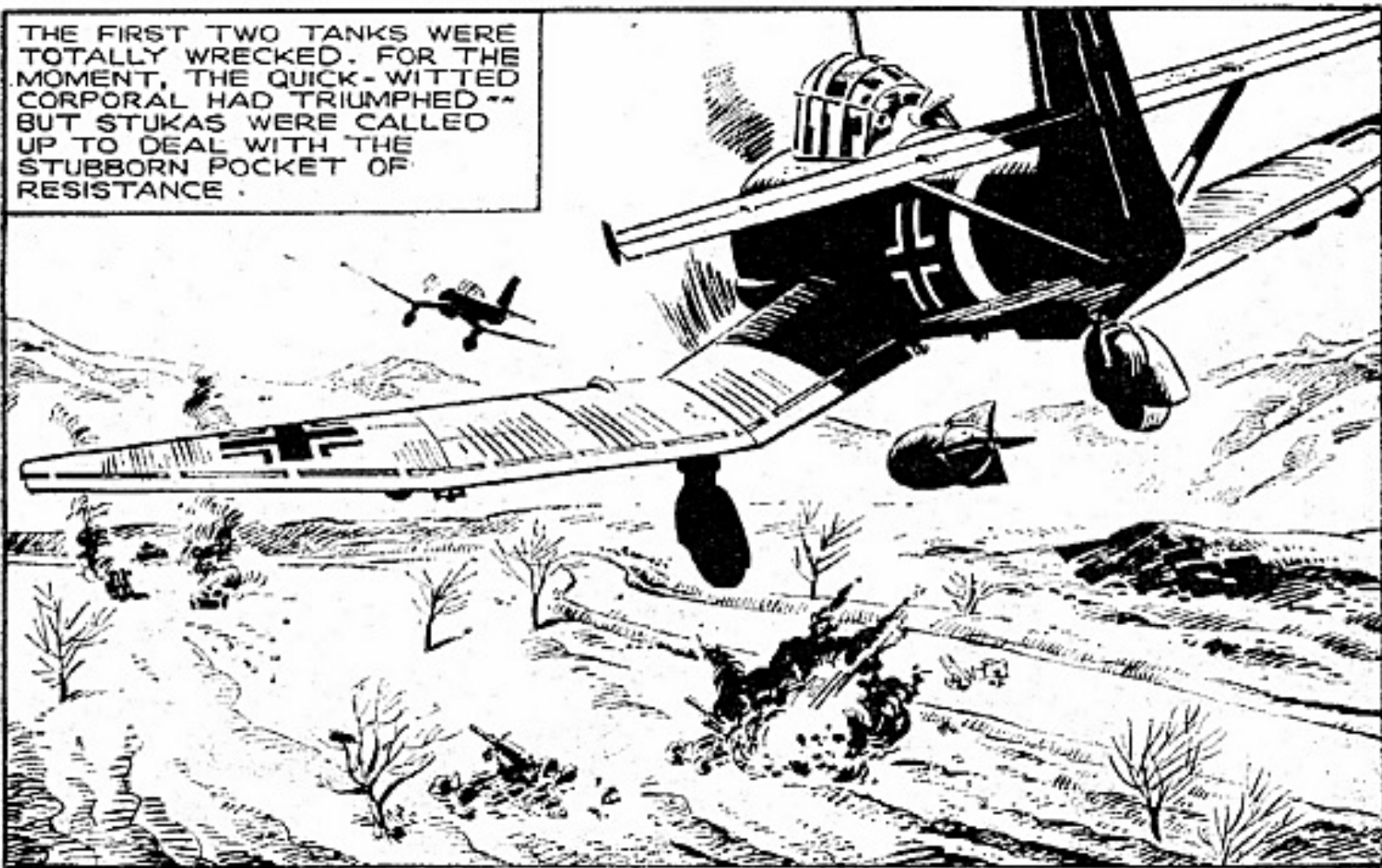
THE ACK-ACK GUN POINTED STRAIGHT AT THE APPROACHING TANK. AT SUCH CLOSE RANGE IT WAS DEADLY ...

ON TARGET!

FIRE!



THE FIRST TWO TANKS WERE TOTALLY WRECKED. FOR THE MOMENT, THE QUICK-WITTED CORPORAL HAD TRIUMPHED -- BUT STUKAS WERE CALLED UP TO DEAL WITH THE STUBBORN POCKET OF RESISTANCE.



ONLY CORPORAL BOB LASSITER AND PRIVATE GEORDIE FLETCHER SURVIVED THE STUKA ATTACK. THEY RETREATED TO THE DUNKIRK BEACHES, WHERE THEY JOINED MAJOR BLAKE.

IT'S GOOD TO SEE YOU, CORPORAL. BUT THE BATTALION'S HAD IT ROUGH--ONLY ABOUT TWENTY OF US LEFT!

ONLY TWENTY, SIR? AND THE FINEST MOB IN THE ARMY!



AFTER THE DUNKIRK EVACUATION, THE FEW SURVIVORS OF THE FIRST BATTALION WERE SENT TO THE REGIMENTAL DEPOT.

BACK TO THE OLD SQUARE-BASHING, GEORDIE.

LOOK AT THOSE NEW RECRUITS! DON'T TELL ME THE OLD FIRST BATTALION'S GOING TO BE MADE UP OF KIDS!



THERE WERE MANY CHANGES IN THE RE-FORMED 1ST. BATTALION. MAJOR BLAKE, PROMOTED TO LIEUTENANT-COLONEL ASSUMED COMMAND, BOB LASSITER BECAME A SERGEANT AND GEORDIE A CORPORAL. A FEW WEEKS LATER, BOB WAS AWARDED THE MILITARY MEDAL.

CONGRATULATIONS, SERGEANT. YOU PUT UP A MAGNIFICENT SHOW!

THANK YOU, SIR!



AFTER THE PRESENTATION, THE GENERAL ADDRESSED THE MEN...

FOR MOST OF YOU THIS IS THE FIRST PARADE WITH THE FIRST BATTALION OF THE SOUTH WEALD REGIMENT. IT IS A PROUD MOMENT FOR YOU! YOU ARE PRIVILEGED TO BELONG TO A UNIT THAT HAS THE FINEST BATTLE-HONOURS IN THE ARMY---



THE BATTLES OF THE PENINSULAR WAR, WATERLOO, RORKE'S DRIFT, LADYSMITH AND MANY OTHERS ARE EMBLAZONED ON YOUR COLOURS. IN THE LAST WAR THE BATTALION FOUGHT ALMOST TO THE LAST MAN AT MONS-- YET RE-FORMED WITH RECRUITS SUCH AS YOU AND ADDED FURTHER GLORIES TO THE FLAG!



PRIDE WAS CLEARLY STAMPED ON THE FACES OF THE RAW YOUNG SOLDIERS AS THEY LISTENED TO THE GENERAL'S FINAL WORDS ...



WHEN NEXT YOUR REGIMENTAL COLOURS ARE UNFURLED, LET THERE BE NEW HONOURS TO BE ADDED -- HONOURS WON BY **YOU!**

Chapter 3. *Invincible Enemy*

IN 1943 THE REGIMENT WAS SENT TO INDIA, ON THE BORDERS OF BURMA. THERE, THEY WERE JOINED BY TWO MEN OF THE 2ND. SOUTH WEALD -- RUSTY BAKER AND TOSH SCOTT!

SERGEANT BAKER AND CORPORAL SCOTT REPORTING, SIR.



GLAD TO HAVE YOU, BAKER! I UNDERSTAND YOU MADE A DARING GETAWAY FROM HONG KONG?

RUSTY WAS NOW A SERGEANT IN THE REGIMENTAL POLICE, TOSH A SIGNALS CORPORAL.

THE TWO MEN HAD TOLD NO-ONE OF THEIR PANICKY DESERTION, BUT HAD INVENTED A STIRRING STORY OF THEIR DARING ESCAPE FROM HONG KONG **AFTER** THE JAPS HAD ATTACKED IT ...

WELL, I WOULDN'T SAY THAT, SIR. JUST CALL US LUCKY!

YOU'RE THE TYPES WE NEED BADLY, SERGEANT. YOU KNOW THE JAPS. TELL OUR CHAPS EVERYTHING, YOU KNOW ABOUT THEM.



BOB LASSITER STEPPED FORWARD TO SPEAK TO THE TWO MEN ...

YOU WERE THE ONLY TWO BLOKES OF THE SECOND BATTALION TO GET AWAY. DO YOU KNOW WHAT HAPPENED TO CORPORAL SWEENEY? HE WAS A PAL OF MINE ...

SWEENEY?
OH, YES -- I REMEMBER! POOR OLD SWEENEY CAUGHT A PACKET. DIDN'T HE, TOSH?



TOSH WAS QUICK TO RESPOND TO HIS FRIEND'S PROMPTING ...

SURE HE DID! WE WERE HEMMED IN AT LYEMUN. THE NIPS WERE SWARMING ALL OVER THE PLACE. SWEENEY WAS NEXT TO US WHEN A MORTAR BOMB GOT HIM!



AS THE TWO "VETERANS" LEFT THE OFFICE, BOB TURNED TO THE R.S.M. WITH A PUZZLED LOOK.

THAT'S FUNNY. BEFORE WE LEFT BLIGHTY, I HAD A LETTER FROM SWEENEY'S FOLKS. THEY'D JUST HEARD FROM THE RED CROSS THAT HE WAS A PRISONER -- AND UNINJURED ...

IT WAS A LONG TIME AGO! MAYBE THEY GOT HIM MIXED UP WITH SOME OTHER BLOKE!





BUT BEFORE SWEENEY'S PARENTS COULD REPLY, THE BATTALION, NOW PART OF THE FOURTEENTH ARMY, STARTED TO FIGHT BACK INTO BURMA ...

TWO DAYS NOW AND WE'VE HARDLY SEEN A NIP EXCEPT FOR THE ODD HIT AND RUN. WHO SAID THEY WERE HOT STUFF?

I DID!



DUE TO THEIR SUPPOSED "EXPERIENCE", RUSTY AND TOSH FOUND THEMSELVES ATTACHED TO A COMBAT COMPANY FOR THE ADVANCE.

I STILL SAY THEY'RE HOT STUFF! REMEMBER TOSH AND ME HAVE TANGLED WITH 'EM. YOU JUST WAIT AND SEE!



ONCE AGAIN, RUSTY BEGAN TO ELABORATE ON HIS KNOWLEDGE OF JAP RUTHLESSNESS AND FIGHTING ABILITY...

THEY'LL BE WAITING FOR US... AND THEY'LL CHARGE LIKE MADMEN! AS FAST AS YOU KILL ONE, ANOTHER WILL POP UP!



AS IF TO JUSTIFY RUSTY'S IMAGINATIVE PREDICTIONS, THE ENEMY WAS ALREADY PREPARING TO STRIKE. MILES ALONG THE ROAD, A PICKED SUICIDE SQUAD HAD BEEN ORDERED TO DELAY THE ADVANCE ...

TAMUKI! IS EVERYONE IN HIS APPOINTED PLACE?

YES, CAPTAIN SAN. WE ARE READY FOR THE WHITE DOGS!



THE LEADING TRUCKS OF THE COMPANY BLUNDERED STRAIGHT INTO THE AMBUSH. AMID A MURDEROUS CROSS-FIRE, MINES AND MORTAR-BOMBS EXPLODED.



RECOVERING QUICKLY, THE BRITISH TROOPS RALLIED AND RE-FORMED. THE SCREAMING JAPS CHARGED FORWARD...



THE AIR WAS SPLIT WITH HISSING LEAD AND THE SHRILL CRIES OF THE ATTACKING JAPS.

WATCH IT!
THEY'RE
HOLDING
GRENADES!



IT WAS A JAP SUICIDE SQUAD THAT HAD ATTACKED. FANATICALLY, THE JAPS FLUNG THEMSELVES AT THE BRITISH TROOPS, GRENADES IN THEIR HANDS, READY TO BLOW THEMSELVES UP IN THEIR BID TO DESTROY THE ENEMY.

AIEEEEEEGH!



BRITISH TROOPS FROM THE FOLLOWING TRUCKS JOINED IN THE FIERCE BATTLE AND, SOON, THEIR WEIGHT OF NUMBERS REVERSED THE PRESSURE.

THAT JAP'S A PERISHIN' SUPERMAN. HE'S BEEN HIT A DOZEN TIMES BUT HE WON'T LIE DOWN!

THIS'LL SORT HIM OUT!



BY THE TIME BOB LASSITER'S PLATOON REACHED THE SCENE THE FIGHT WAS OVER...

GOOD GRIEF! IT MUST HAVE BEEN HAND-TO-HAND STUFF!

I'D NEVER HAVE BELIEVED IT, SARGE... NEVER!



THIS SAVAGE BATTLE CONFIRMED ALL THE FEARSOME IMAGES RUSTY HAD BEEN CONJURING UP!

WHAT DID I TELL YOU! IT'S LIKE FIGHTING ROBOTS! DYING MEANS NOTHING TO 'EM!

QUIT YAMMERING! THEY'RE ALL WIPED OUT, AREN'T THEY?



BUT THEY WIPED OUT
A LOT MORE OF US!
YOU MET UP WITH 'EM
BEFORE, SARGE?

YOU BET!
IN HONG KONG,
IN FORTY-ONE ME AND
TOSH SCOTT,
HERE.

HOW D'YOU THINK RUSTY
CAME BY THAT SCAR ON HIS
FACE? JAP OFFICER'S SWORD
DID THAT! I CAUGHT ONE
ACROSS THE BACK. LUCKY
TO BE ALIVE!



SEEING THE UNEASY LOOKS
ON THE FACES OF THE
YOUNGSTERS IN THE
PLATOON, BOB DREW THE
TWO 'HEROES' ON ONE
SIDE...

LOOK-- WHY DON'T
YOU TWO PUT A
SOCK IN IT? TODAY'S
SHAMBLES WAS BAD
ENOUGH WITHOUT
YOU SHOOTING
YOUR MOUTHS
OFF!



BOB WAS TOO BUSY WITH RUSTY AND TOSH TO NOTICE THAT ONE OF THE JAPS CLOSE BY WAS NOT AS DEAD AS HE WAS PRETENDING TO BE ...



UNSEEN BY THE UNSUSPECTING TROOPS, THE WOUNDED JAP SLOWLY ROLLED OVER, THEN



THE DEAD JAP FELL BACK TO THE GROUND AND THE MEN STOOD IN STUNNED SILENCE. RUSTY AND TOSH WERE QUICK TO TAKE ADVANTAGE ...

HE'S RIGHT, SARGE! GOSH! THEY GIVE ME THE WILLIES!

WIPED OUT, WERE THEY?
THE JAPS ARE NEVER DEAD
TILL THEY'RE BURIED!

SHUT
UP!



THE DISASTROUS INCIDENTS HAD A DEMORALISING EFFECT ON THE YOUNG SOLDIERS.

I THOUGHT THE SARGE
AND THE CORPORAL HAD
BEEN PULLING A FAST
ONE WITH THEIR YARNS
ABOUT THE NIPS. NOW I'M
NOT SO SURE, SID.

NOR
ME!



THOSE TWO LINE-SHOOTERS
HAVE GOT THE LADS LAPPING
UP THEIR TWADDLE! IF I HAVE
MY WAY, THEY'RE NOT GOING TO
STAY WITH US MUCH LONGER!



Chapter 4. *The Turtle!*

BOB LASSITER HAD A WORD WITH THE R.S.M. AND THE TWO TROUBLE-MAKERS WERE RETURNED TO REGIMENTAL HEADQUARTERS. THE JAPS CONTINUED TO RETREAT TO THEIR PREPARED LINES AT RABIZAL, WHERE THEIR FORTRESS WAS KNOWN AS "THE TURTLE". A CONFERENCE WAS HELD AT BRIGADE HEADQUARTERS TO PLAN AN ATTACK.

THE TURTLE IS GOING TO BE A HARD NUT TO CRACK, GENTLEMEN. THE PERIMETER CONTAINS A NUMBER OF HILL CRESTS, WITH TRENCHES DUG ROUND THEM ...



THE HEART OF THE TURTLE IS AN UNDERGROUND CAVE -- AN OLD RUBY MINE, WITH PASSAGES LEADING TO IT. YOU CAN WAGER, GENTLEMEN, THAT ACCESS TO THE CENTRAL CAVE WILL BE HOTLY DISPUTED!



THE BRIGADIER TURNED TO LIEUTENANT-COLONEL BLAKE ...



THE NIGHT BEFORE THE ATTACK ON THE TURTLE, BOB LASSITER MADE THE ROUNDS OF HIS PLATOON.

HELLO, GEORDIE. EVERYTHING OKAY?

I RECKON SO, BOB. ALL WEAPONS HAVE BEEN CHECKED AND CLEANED. AMMO'S BEEN DRAWN AND DISTRIBUTED.



BUT THE MEN IN BOB'S PLATOON WERE GATHERED ROUND THE HEADQUARTERS SIGNAL TRUCK OPERATED BY TOSH SCOTT...

THERE SHE IS
TOKYO ROSE!

IT IS KNOWN THAT YOU
BRITISH BOYS PLAN TO
ATTACK THE FORTRESS AT
RABIZAL! YOUR COMMANDERS
ARE FOOLISH. NOTHING BUT
DEATH AWAITS YOU...



TOKYO ROSE WAS AN ENGLISH-SPEAKING JAPANESE GIRL BROADCASTING PROPAGANDA DIRECTLY TO THE ALLIED TROOPS. BOB LASSITER WAS FURIOUS...

SCOTT! SWITCH
OFF THAT
RADIO!

THIS IS THE
H.Q. SIGNAL
TRUCK, SARGE.
I DON'T TAKE
ORDERS FROM
YOU!

SOON
THERE WILL
BE SORROWING
HEARTS IN
ENGLAND...



BUT BOB WAS
IN NO MOOD
TO CONSIDER
REGIMENTAL
PROCEDURE...

IT'S AGAINST ORDERS TO
PICK UP CIVVY BROADCASTS
ON ARMY RADIO, SCOTT.
AND I'M FED UP TO THE
TEETH WITH YOU AND YOUR
PAL, BAKER, GIVING MY
LADS THE JITTERS...



THE JAPS MAY BE ALL YOU
SAY, BUT I DON'T BELIEVE
THEY ARE. TOMORROW WE'LL
FIND OUT WHO'S RIGHT. UNTIL
THEN-- LEAVE MY MEN
ALONE!



OKAY, SARGE.
DON'T GET BURNED
UP! IT WAS ALL
IN FUN!

TOSH, WHO HAD YET TO TANGLE WITH A JAP, HAD REACHED THE STAGE WHERE HE WAS BEGINNING TO BELIEVE HIS OWN LIES...

AND THE BEST OF BRITISH LUCK! YOU AND YOUR PRECIOUS LADS WILL SEE WE HAVEN'T BEEN TALKING SCOTCH MIST!



"C" COMPANY OF THE 1ST. SOUTH WEALD COMMENCED THE ASSAULT ON THE TURTLE AT FIRST LIGHT. BOB LASSITER'S PLATOON WAS DETACHED TO TAKE OVER THE FLANK POSITION.

SERGEANT LASSITER -- TAKE TWO SECTIONS AND DEPLOY FROM THE SOUTH. I'LL GO STRAIGHT AHEAD WITH THE REST OF THE PLATOON.

RIGHT, SIR.



AS THEY REACHED THE THICKER JUNGLE, BOB COULD SENSE AN ATMOSPHERE OF UNEASINESS AMONG HIS MEN...

LOOK WHERE YOU'RE GOING, STEVENS! YOU NEARLY HAD ME OVER THEN, YOU BIG CLOT!

CLOT YOURSELF, BIGHEAD!

ALL RIGHT--YOU TWO! THAT'S ENOUGH OF THAT! SAVE IT FOR THE JAPS!

IT WAS NOT LONG BEFORE THE JAPANESE OUTPOSTS STARTED THEIR OLD TACTICS--TRYING TO SCARE THEIR OPPONENTS WITH YELLS AND THREATS...

JOHNNY! OVER HERE! I'M CAUGHT IN A SWAMP!

WE KILL YOU, JOHNNY!



THE HAWK-EYED SNIPER FIRED AS THE PIECE OF WOOD CRASHED NEAR HIS TREE. IT WAS HIS LAST SHOT!

GOT HIM!



AT LAST, BOB LASSITER'S UNIT REACHED THEIR OBJECTIVE, WHERE THEY JOINED UP WITH THE REST OF THE PLATOON ...

THREE MINUTES TO ZERO. ALL SET, SERGEANT?

I GUESS SO, SIR, BUT ...



BUT WHAT, SERGEANT?

OH-- NOTHING, SIR-- NOTHING IMPORTANT...



THE MINUTES TICKED AWAY. AT 0745 HOURS THE COMPANY SELECTED FOR THE FIRST ASSAULT WOULD ATTACK ...

FIVE - FOUR - THREE - TWO - ONE - ZERO! CHARGE!



BOB FOUND IT DIFFICULT TO TELL THE OFFICER THAT HE FELT THE MEN WERE TOO TENSE, TOO KEYED UP TO ATTACK.

AS THE MEN OF THE SOUTH WEALD RACED IN FIRING, THE JAPS IN THE THREATENED BUNKERED HILL WENT TO GROUND. A RED VEREY LIGHT FLARED. IT WAS THE SIGNAL TO THE OTHER HILL-TOP POSITIONS TO LAY DOWN PREPARED CROSS-FIRE. A WITHERING CURTAIN OF LEAD MET THE ATTACKERS...



CAUGHT TWO-WAYS, THE RAW YOUNG TROOPS FALTERED...AND STOPPED...

COME ON! WE'RE NOT FINISHED YET!

I AM, SARGE! IT'S LIKE THEY SAID, THESE JAPS ARE TOO CLEVER FOR US!



AS THE ATTACK FADED, THE JAPS CAME YELLING FROM THEIR TRENCHES AND BUNKERS ...

BANZAI!

BANZAI!



EVERYTHING THEY HAD HEARD ABOUT THE DEATH-DEFYING WARRIORS OF THE JAPANESE ARMY CRYSTALLISED INTO ICE-COLD FEAR IN THE MEN OF BOB'S PLATOON ...

THEY'RE LIKE MACHINES! WE CAN'T FIGHT THIS!





WITH THE FLANK TURNED, THE WHOLE COMPANY HAD TO FALL BACK. THE ATTEMPT TO CAPTURE THE TURTLE HAD FAILED.

WHAT A SHAMBLES! WHAT WENT WRONG, SERGEANT?

SIMPLE, SIR. THE MEN GOT THE WIND-UP. THEY'VE GOT THE IDEA THAT THE JAPS ARE SUPERMEN!



SUPERMEN! THAT'S RIDICULOUS!

RIDICULOUS TO YOU AND ME, SIR, BUT NOT TO SOME OF THESE LADS...

INWARDLY, BOB LASSITER WAS RAGING. IT WAS HIS PLATOON WHICH HAD CRACKED AND ENDANGERED THE REST OF THE COMPANY.

AND I KNOW WHERE THE ROT STARTED. IT WAS THOSE TWO DRATTED HEROES FROM HONG KONG!



Chapter 5. *Cut to Size*

IN THE COMMAND POST, LIEUTENANT-COLONEL BLAKE WAS SPENDING THE WORST HALF-HOUR OF HIS LIFE. FOR THE FIRST TIME IN ITS HISTORY, THE 1ST. SOUTH WEALD HAD FAILED WITH IGNOMINY—AS THE BRIGADIER WAS TACTLESS ENOUGH TO POINT OUT!

LOOK, OLD CHAP—IT WON'T DO! THE JAP POSITIONS ARE TOUGHER THAN WE EXPECTED...BUT YOUR CHAPS NEVER EVEN TRIED!



I'VE CALLED UP THE TANK BOYS. THEY WANT TO TRY A NEW PLAN—BUT IT REQUIRES CLOSE CO-OPERATION WITH THE INFANTRY. YOU'VE HAD YOUR INNINGS—I'LL TRY ANOTHER REGIMENT...

WAIT, SIR—GIVE US ONE MORE CHANCE! WE'VE GOT TO REDEEM OURSELVES...



IT TOOK ANOTHER TEN MINUTES TO CONVINCE THE BRIGADIER... BUT HE FINALLY AGREED...

I WARN YOU! IF YOU LET ME DOWN, YOU'LL NEVER HEAR THE END OF IT!

NOT TO WORRY, SIR! YOU CAN RELY ON THE SOUTH WEALD.



LATER THAT DAY, THE C.O. HAD "C" COMPANY ON PARADE. WISELY, HE SAID LITTLE ABOUT THE NEAR-DISASTER... MEN RUN AWAY ONLY BECAUSE SOMETHING STRONGER THAN THEIR WILL DRIVES THEM TO IT. BUT HE ASKED FOR VOLUNTEERS ONLY FOR THE NEXT ATTACK...

WE WILL HAVE TANKS IN SUPPORT THIS TIME AND A COMPLETELY NEW PLAN.





BRIEFLY, THIS IS THE SCHEME. THE TANKS GO IN FIRING SURFACE-BURST HIGH EXPLOSIVE TO CLEAR THE JUNGLE, THEN DELAYED-ACTION SHELLS TO BREAK UP THE FACE OF THE BUNKERS. IT WON'T BE PLEASANT -- AND ANY MAN NOT FEELING ABSOLUTELY FIT NEEDN'T GO...

TO BOB LASSITER'S DISGUST, MORE THAN HALF HIS PLATOON WERE OBVIOUSLY GOING TO TAKE ADVANTAGE OF THE COMMANDING OFFICER'S TACTFULLY PHRASED OFFER...



AW-- WE'VE DONE OUR BIT, SARGE! LET SOME OF THE OTHER LAY-ABOUTS HAVE A BASH.

WHAT DO YOU THINK OF THE JAPS NOW, LASSITER? STILL THINK YOU CAN EAT 'EM BEFORE BREAKFAST?

BOB IGNORED RUSTY BAKER'S REMARK. HE KNEW HE WOULD ONLY LOSE HIS TEMPER AT THE TWO MEN HE BLAMED FOR HIS PLATOON'S POOR SHOWING ...

ALL RIGHT, YOU LOT. COLONEL BLAKE HAS GIVEN YOU THE EXCUSE. THE BEST THING YOU CAN DO IS TAKE THOSE BADGES OFF. **YOU'RE NOT FIT TO BE IN THE SOUTH WEALD!**



BUT THE ROT HAD SET IN. LIKE SHEEP, THE MEN FOLLOWED EACH OTHER IN TAKING THE EASY WAY OUT. RUSTY AND TOSH QUIETLY EGGED THEM ON. IN SOME STRANGE WAY, THEY WERE QUIETENING THEIR OWN CONSCIENCES...

TOSH AND ME HAVE SEEN ALL THIS BEFORE! IT'S LIKE BASHING YOUR HEAD AGAINST A BRICK WALL! THE JAPS JUST CAN'T BE BEATEN!



WITH 'C' COMPANY MADE UP TO STRENGTH FROM THE RESERVE COMPANY, THE SECOND ATTACK STARTED ON THE TURTLE -- THIS TIME WITH TANKS IN SUPPORT...

REMEMBER -- WHEN YOU LOT GO IN, WE'LL FIRE PAST YOU WITH ARMOUR-PIERCING SHELLS. BUT DON'T PANIC -- WE WON'T HIT YOU!



SLOWLY ADVANCING, THE TANK GUNNERS CLEARED THE JUNGLE WITH SURFACE-BURST HIGH EXPLOSIVE, CLEARING THE WAY FOR THE FOLLOWING INFANTRY.



AS THE TROOPS CROUCHED BEHIND THE TANKS, THE BUNKERS WERE SHELLED RELENTLESSLY. THE JAPS KEPT LOW, WAITING FOR THE BARRAGE TO DIE DOWN... WAITING FOR THE INFANTRY ATTACK...



NOT A SIGN OF 'EM YET! THEY'RE SAVING THEIR FIRE UNTIL WE GO IN!

BUT AS THE MEN OF "C" COMPANY CHARGED FORWARD, THE TANKS SWITCHED TO SOLID SHOT. DEADLY ACCURACY WAS REQUIRED FROM THE GUNNERS AS THEY FIRED OVER THE HEADS OF THE INFANTRY...

SUFFERING SNAKES! WHAT ARE THEY TRYING TO DO -- PART MY FLIPPING HAIR?



THE ENEMY, COMPLETELY FOXED BY THE NEW TECHNIQUE, PUT UP ONLY A TOKEN RESISTANCE. THE OUTER BASTIONS OF THE TURTLE WERE BROKEN!

AEEEEGH!



BEYOND THE BUNKERS LAY THE HEART OF THE TURTLE -- THE OLD RUBY MINE -- SOLID AND FORMIDABLE. EVEN THE TANK SHELLS HAD LITTLE EFFECT ON THE DEEP DUG BASTION, WITH TOUGH TEAK DOORS GUARDING THE MINE SHAFTS.

IT'S NO GOOD. THEY'VE GOT TO BE WINKLED OUT...



INFORMED OF THE POSITION, THE COMMANDING OFFICER ORDERED A TEMPORARY WITHDRAWAL TO RE-GROUP AND CONSOLIDATE.



GRAB SOME OF THOSE BOTTLES, GEORDIE. WE'LL SHOW MY LADS WHERE THE JAPS GET THEIR COURAGE!

BACK IN THE COMPANY BASE, A GROUP OF SHAME-FACED MEN, WHO HAD WATCHED THEIR COMRADES RETURN IN TRIUMPH, LISTENED SULKILY TO THEIR SERGEANT.

THIS IS HOW YOUR SUPERMEN GET THEIR BRAVERY! IT'S ALL DUTCH COURAGE! THEY'RE DOPED WITH RICE-WINE!



SULLENLY, THEY TRIED
TO BRAZEN IT OUT...

I HEAR THEY'VE STILL
GOT US LICKED, SARGE!
YOU ONLY GOT THE
OUTPOSTS TODAY. WHAT
ABOUT THE TURTLE
ITSELF?

WE'RE GOING TO
TAKE IT, CHUM! YOU
AND ME AND ALL THE
REST OF YOU, IF I'VE GOT
TO KICK YOU ALL THE WAY!

BUT BOB KNEW THEY WERE STILL UNCONVINCED. SOMETHING ELSE WAS NEEDED
TO BREAK DOWN THE FEARSOME FIGURE OF THE ENEMY THEY HAD BUILT UP
IN THEIR OWN MINDS...

MAIL UP!
COME AND
GET IT!

FOR THE MOMENT ALL WAS FORGOTTEN EXCEPT THE MAIL FROM HOME. BUT AMONG HIS LETTERS, BOB FOUND ONE THAT SENT HIM IN SEARCH OF THE R.S.M.

REMEMBER WE WERE TALKING ABOUT MY OLD PAL SWEENEY IN THE SECOND BATTALION, SIR?

YES--BAKER AND SCOTT SAID HE WAS KILLED IN HONG KONG.

I'VE HAD A LETTER FROM SWEENEY'S FATHER. HE SAYS HIS SON WAS TAKEN PRISONER-- AND HE'S SENT THIS INSTEAD OF A PHOTO. IT'S THE PRE-WAR FOOTBALL TEAM OF THE SECOND BATTALION-- SWEENEY PLAYED IN GOAL.

SURE--YOU WERE GOING TO ASK BAKER IF HE RECOGNISED HIM...

BUT BAKER'S IN THAT PHOTOGRAPH TOO, SIR! A PRE-WAR PHOTO AND HE HAD THE SCAR ON HIS CHEEK THEN-- THE SCAR HE SAYS HE GOT AT HONG KONG!

IN THE REAR H.Q. AREA, BOB FOUND THE TWO MEN HE SOUGHT.

IS THAT SWEENEY IN GOAL IN THAT PICTURE, BAKER?

SURE IT IS!
AND THAT'S ME --
I PLAYED AT
RIGHT HALF.

HOW COME YOU
SAW SWEENEY
KILLED IN HONG
KONG? HIS FATHER
SAYS HE'S A
PRISONER.

GLAD TO HEAR IT, LASSITER!
ME AND TOSH COULD HAVE
MADE A MISTAKE. IT WAS
PRETTY ROUGH AT THE
TIME, YOU KNOW ...

BOB COULD SEE THE MEN GATHERING ROUND. THAT WAS WHAT HE WANTED, THE BIGGER THE AUDIENCE, THE BETTER...

YES, IT WAS SO TOUGH YOU GOT THAT SCAR THERE -- FUNNY YOU HAD IT IN THAT PHOTO TAKEN BEFORE THE WAR! AND YOU'RE ALWAYS TALKING ABOUT THE WOUND ACROSS YOUR BACK, SCOTT -- LET'S HAVE A DEKKO!



BEFORE TOSH SCOTT COULD REPLY, BOB GRABBED HIM, RIPPING THE SHIRT UP HIS BACK.


WHAT A TERRIBLE WOUND, EH? IT DIDN'T EVEN LEAVE A MARK!

LET ME GO!



HIS SUSPICIONS ALMOST CONFIRMED, BOB PULLED HIS BLUFF...

YOU KNOW WHAT I THINK?
I RECKON YOU'RE A COUPLE
OF FAKES! YOU SCARPERED
BEFORE THE FIGHTING
EVEN STARTED!



RUSTY BAKER TRIED TO
BLUFF IT OUT...

DON'T TALK
DAFT, LASSITER!
WE WERE FIGHTING
JAPS WHEN YOU
WERE COOLING
YOUR HEELS IN
BLIGHTY!

I WANT
THE TRUTH,
BAKER!



IT WAS TOSH SCOTT WHO BROKE FIRST. THE WORDS POURED OUT AS IF IT WAS A RELIEF TO GET RID OF THE THREE-YEAR-OLD SECRET...

I'LL TELL YOU THE TRUTH, LASSITER! I'M SICK OF BOTTLING IT UP! WE SKIPPED BEFORE THE JAPS EVER GOT TO THE ISLAND!



IT WAS A CLEAN CONFESSION, AND RUSTY DID NOT DENY IT...

I DON'T KNOW WHAT CAME OVER US! I'VE FELT ROTTEN EVER SINCE -- BUT IT WAS TOO LATE TO DO ANYTHING ABOUT IT!



BOB FELT A SUDDEN COMPASSION FOR THEM. IT WAS A SITUATION THAT COULD HAVE HAPPENED TO ANYBODY...

IT'S NOT TOO LATE. LOOK, BLOKES--FORGET EVERYTHING YOU EVER HEARD ABOUT THE DO-OR-DIE JAPS. THEY'RE NOT SUPERMEN-- FAR FROM IT!





STILL SHAME-FACED, RUSTY BAKER CAME UP TO LASSITER ...

IF TOSH AND I CAN FIX IT, CAN WE COME WITH YOU AND YOUR MOB? WE'VE A SCORE TO PAY OFF...



THAT NIGHT, BOB LISTENED TO THE EXCITED CHATTER OF THE MEN IN HIS PLATOON. NOW THEY HAD BEGUN TO GET SOME IDEA OF THE REAL NATURE OF THE ENEMY THEY FACED, THE JAPS DID NOT SEEM SUCH A TOUGH PROPOSITION.

WE'RE GOING TO HAVE QUITE A PARTY TOMORROW, GEORDIE! AND I'VE AN IDEA HOW WE CAN GET INSIDE THE TURTLE!



EARLY NEXT MORNING, THE BRIGADIER AND LIEUTENANT-COLONEL BLAKE WATCHED THE TANKS AND INFANTRY MOVE UP...

GOOD SHOW YESTERDAY, PETER. PITY YOUR BOYS COULDN'T COMPLETE THE JOB...

IT'S A HARD NUT TO CRACK, SIR... BUT ONE OF MY SERGEANTS CAME UP WITH AN IDEA. IT MAY WORK...



THIS TIME THE REVITALISED SOUTH WEALD MEANT TO FINISH THE JOB. AS THEY ADVANCED, THE ENEMY PULLED IN HIS SKIRMISHERS TO THE MAIN KEEP OF THE TURTLE.



The Tall Shadows

SUDDENLY A TANK, CARRYING AN OIL-DRUM AND A BUNCH OF INFANTRYMEN, EDGED CLOSE IN TO THE MINE SHAFT, RISKING GRENADE AND MORTAR FIRE...

UNSTRAP THE DRUM!
GEORDIE, START LOBBING
GRENADES! COME ON,
RUSTY~~LET'S GO!



WITH FIERCE COVERING FIRE FROM THE TANKS, BOB, TOSH, RUSTY AND A PRIVATE RACED FOR THE DOME OF THE TURTLE, CARRYING THE EIGHT GALLON OIL-DRUM~~FULL OF PETROL!



DOWN THE AIR-SHAFT OF THE OLD MINE THEY POURED A STREAM OF PETROL ...

THAT'S THE LOT! NOW GET BACK BEFORE I STOKES UP!



BOB TOOK A GRENADE AND FLUNG IT DOWN THE AIR VENT AFTER THE PETROL. THE JAPS PANICKED AS A SHEET OF FLAME ERUPTED THROUGH THE TUNNELS ...





SMOKED OUT FROM THE DEEP GALLERIES, THE ENEMY SWARMED INTO THE OPEN ... INTO A DEADLY CURTAIN OF FLYING LEAD ...

HERE THEY COME!
FIRE!

THE FINAL RESISTANCE WAS SHORT-LIVED. COMPLETELY DEMORALISED, THE JAPS GAVE UP.

WHO SAID THEY NEVER SURRENDER?



RUSTY AND TOSH WERE TRIUMPHANT
AFTER THE ATTACK ...

ME, TOO! I WAS
DEAD SCARED, BUT
WHEN YOU'RE IN THE
THICK OF IT, IT
ISN'T SO BAD ...

I FEEL AS IF A
TON WEIGHT HAS
BEEN LIFTED OFF
MY SHOULDERS,
BOB!



THE FALL OF THE TURTLE
FORTRESS HASTENED THE
JAPANESE COLLAPSE IN THE
ARAKAN -- SOON THE
FOURTEENTH ARMY WAS
SWEEPING ON ...

HELLO, PETER!
I SUPPOSE THE
FIRST SOUTH WEAULD
WILL BE CLAIMING
ARAKAN AS A
BATTLE-HONOUR!

YOU BET WE
WILL, SIR -- AND A
FEW MORE PLACES
BEFORE THIS WAR'S
OVER!



THE ARAKAN BATTLE, JUDGED BY THE SIZE OF THE FORCES INVOLVED, WAS NOT OF THE GREATEST MAGNITUDE, BUT IT WAS THE TURNING POINT OF THE BURMA CAMPAIGN. AS THE LEADER OF THE FOURTEENTH ARMY, GENERAL WILLIAM SLIM, EMPHASISED LATER.



IT WAS A VICTORY, AND ITS EFFECT ON THE FOURTEENTH ARMY WAS IMMENSE! THE LEGEND OF JAPANESE INVINCIBILITY IN THE JUNGLE, SO LONG FOSTERED BY SO MANY WHO SHOULD HAVE KNOWN BETTER, WAS SMASHED...

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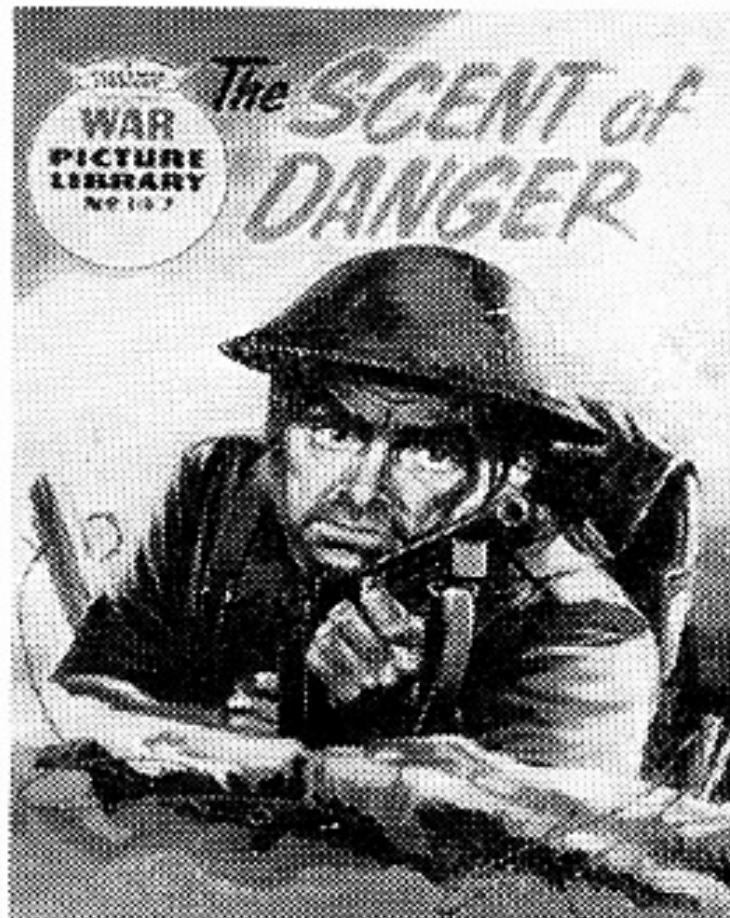
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